

The Elimination of Ergative Patterns of Case-Marking
and Verbal Agreement in Modern Indic Languages

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Introduction.

As is well known, many of the modern Indic languages are partially ergative, showing accusative patterns of case-marking and verbal agreement in nonpast tenses, but ergative patterns in some or all past tenses. This partial ergativity is not at all stable in these languages, however; what I wish to show in the present paper, in fact, is that a large array of factors is contributing to the elimination of partial ergativity in the modern Indic languages. The forces leading to the decay of ergativity are diverse in nature; and any one of these may exert a profound influence on the syntactic development of one language but remain ineffectual in another.

Before discussing this erosion of partial ergativity in Modern Indic, I would like to review the history of what the Indian grammarians call the prayōgas ('constructions') of a past tense verb with its subject and direct object arguments; the decay of Indic ergativity is, I believe, best envisioned as the effect of analogical developments on or within the system of prayōgas.

There are three prayōgas in early Modern Indic. The first of these is the kartariprayōga, or 'active construction' of intransitive verbs. In the kartariprayōga, the verb agrees (in number and gender) with its subject, which is in the nominative case--thus, in Vernacular Hindōstānī:

(1) kartariprayōga:

'aurat chalī. mard chalā.
woman (nom.) went (fem. sg.) man (nom.) went (masc. sg.)

The karmaniprayōga is the 'passive construction' of transitive verbs: the verb agrees in number and gender with its object, which is in the nominative case, while the subject is in the ergative case:

(2) karmaniprayōga:

'aurat-nē ghōṛī mārī.
woman erg. mare (nom.) struck (fem. sg.)

'aurat-nē ghōṛā mārā.
woman erg. horse (nom.) struck (masc. sg.)

Finally, the bhāveprayōga is the 'impersonal construction', which is historically used only with intransitive verbs. In the bhāveprayōga, the verb is singular and neuter (or masculine, in those languages having lost the neuter gender), and the subject is ergative, as in Vernacular Hindōstānī:

(3) bhāveprayōga:

'aurat-nē chalā. us-nē chalā.
woman erg. went (masc. sg.) he erg. went (masc. sg.)

(Examples from Grierson (1916: IX.1.51-52))

1. The history of the prayōgas.

These prayōgas are, in some form or another, as old as attested Indic. In Vedic and especially in epic Sanskrit, there was a tendency to use the past passive participle in -ta (with or without the copula) in place of finite preterit verb forms (Whitney 1889:362, Bloch 1906). This past passive participle or verbal adjective could be derived from any verb, whether transitive or intransitive; in the latter case, the participle was less passive in meaning than merely preterital-ukta 'spoken', but gata 'gone' (see Whitney 1889:340). Thus, past passive participial sentences could stand as active intransitive sentences and as passive transitive sentences--like any other adjective, this participle agreed with its subject in number and gender in such constructions:

(4) rāmo gataḥ (asti)
Rama (nom.) gone (masc. sg.) is

(5) rāmeṇa pustakam paṭhitam (asti)
Rama (instr.) book (nom.) read (neut. sg.) is

Some few transitive verbs could also be used actively:

(6) devadatta odanam prabhuktaḥ
Devadatta (nom.) porridge (acc.) enjoyed (masc. sg.)
(asti)
is

Fairly late on in the history of Sanskrit, an impersonal construction rose to prominence with the past passive participle of an intransitive verb in the neuter singular and the subject in the instrumental case:

(7) rāmeṇa gataṁ (asti)
Rama (instr.) gone (neut. sg.) is

It's likely that this impersonal construction resulted from an extension of the passive construction exemplified by (5) to intransitive verbs (Renou 1930:498; Bloch 1906:58-9). Perhaps such transitive verbs as prabhuj (see (6)) provided for this analogical extension--

- (8) devadatta (nom.) odanaṁ (acc.) prabhuktaḥ (masc. sg.):
devadattenaudanaṁ prabhuktaṁ (neut. sg.):
(instr.) (nom.)
rāmo (nom.) gataḥ (masc. sg.): X
X = rāmeṇa (instr.) gataṁ (neut. sg.)

In any event, the historical basis of the three prayōgas is clearly reflected in the Sanskrit participial constructions exemplified in (4), (5), and (7). It is no more than reflected, however, since the modern Indic languages aren't directly descended from the classical language, but from its sister dialects; nevertheless, since the germ of the prayōgas is attested even in Vedic (from which the modern Indic languages, as well as Sanskrit, do ultimately descend), we can rest assured that the Sanskrit reflection is an accurate one.

The emergence of the three prayōgas in Middle Indic is also clear, even if many of our conclusions regarding this development must be drawn from texts whose language is an artificial abstraction from spoken Prakrits. In the earlier Prakrits, such as Pali and Jaina Prakrit, the equivalents of constructions (4), (5), and (7) were still treated as participial, but, since the Old Indic preterit tenses were starting to disappear--the imperfect and the aorist had fallen together, and the perfect had virtually vanished (Beames 1879:8-20; Bloch 1965:228-9; Grierson 1916:IX.I.50-51; Hoernle 1880:217; Sen 1960:143)--the reliance on participial constructions in preterit contexts was snowballing (Bloch 1965:234). The classical Prakrits such as Mahārāṣṭrī and Śaurasenī, regularly expressed the past tense participially (Beames 1879:23); and by late Middle Indic, the Apabhraṁśa dialects had retained no other means of expressing it (Beames 1879:26-27; Tagare 1948:282,316-19; Sen 1960:164). Thus, by the end of the Middle Indic period, the descendant of the Old Indic past passive participle had become functionally integrated into the verbal system--that is, it had come to provide the basis for a number of preterit conjugations in late Middle Indic (these conjugations are referred to as participial tenses, whether they are periphrastic or synthetic, in Modern Indic). As a consequence, the three prayōgas had become established as the means of organizing sentences in the participial tenses; the Indic languages had become partially ergative. This late Middle Indic ergativity may be schematized as follows:

(9) <u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal Inflection</u>
kartariprayōga	nominative	--	number, gender of subject
karmaṇiprayōga	ergative (former instrumental)	nominative	number, gender of object
bhāveprayōga	ergative	--	neuter singular

It is at this stage, during the transition from Middle Indic to Modern Indic, that diverse forces began to erode this partial ergativity, in spite of a few conservative tendencies.

2. Conservative and eliminative tendencies in Modern Indic.

I would now like to survey both the conservative and the eliminative tendencies according as their effect is to reinforce or eliminate ergative characteristics of object and subject case-marking, and of verbal agreement.

2.1. The transitive impersonal construction.

Early on in their modern development, nearly every Indic language begins using transitive verbs with explicit objects in a construction clearly derivative of the *bhāveprayōga* (Chatterji 1926:897). In this secondary construction, the subject is ergative, the verb impersonal (neuter or masculine singular), and the object in the dative or accusative (hereafter, oblique) case; in many languages, this construction may only be used when its direct object is definite (and in some cases, animate). Thus, we find in Hindōstānī (examples have in some instances been altered to eliminate major orthographic inconsistencies):

- (10) 'aurat-nē ghōṛē-kō mārā.
woman erg. horse obl. struck (masc. sg.)

'aurat-nē ghōṛī-kō mārā.
woman erg. mare obl. struck (masc. sg.)

(Grierson 1916:IX.I.52)

in Marāṭhī:

- (11) ghōḍyā-lā mī sōḍilē.
horse obl. I (erg.) loosed (neut. sg.)
(masc.)

pōthī-lā mī vācilē.
book obl. I (erg.) read (neut. sg.)
(fem.)

(Hoernle 1880:327)

in Kumaunī, a Central Pahārī language:

- (12) maī-le wī - kaṇi māro.
I erg. she obl. struck (masc. sg.)

(Grierson 1916:IX.IV.147)

and in East Panjābī:

- (13) óne dūjīaṇ kitābaṇ nury mez te rōkkhya
he (erg.) other books obl. table on put (masc. sg.)

(Shackle 1972:82)

Again, this construction is the rule in early Modern Indic (although it has since become obscure in the more innovative languages).

The analogical creation of this impersonal transitive construction is apparently based on a pattern established in nonparticipial (i.e. accusative) tenses; for example, in Vernacular Hindōstānī, the impersonal transitive sentence (14) fulfils the analogical proportion 15 : 16 :: 17 : x.

- (14) us-ne is ciṭṭhī-ko likhā.
she erg. this letter obl. wrote (masc. sg.)
(fem.)
- (15) voh bol rōhī hoy.
she (nom.) is speaking (3rd sg. fem.)
- (16) voh is ciṭṭhī-ko likh rōhī hoy.
she (nom.) this letter obl. is writing (3rd sg. fem.)
- (17) us-ne bolā.
she erg. spoke (masc. sg.)

(Cf. Harley 1944:32-33)

This newly-created construction is clearly eliminative of an ergative characteristic of direct objects: it allows direct objects in ergative contexts to be case-marked exactly as they are in accusative contexts.

2.2. Conservative trends.

Despite this first very general blow dealt to Modern Indic ergativity, several of the languages have, in their modern development, shown tendencies to retain ergative features of case-marking and verbal agreement. I shall survey these tendencies as they are manifested in Hindī, Gujarātī, and Marāṭhī.

2.2.1. Conservative tendencies in subject case-marking.

Interestingly, some Hindī dialects (e.g. literary Hindōstānī) have eliminated the impersonal intransitive construction (i.e. the original bhāveprayōga) while retaining the secondary impersonal transitive construction just described (Grierson (1916: IX.I.51); Chatterji (1926:968)). This levelling out of the impersonal intransitive construction in the participial tenses might be thought of as a tendency conservative of an ergative characteristic of subjects, since it suppresses a construction in which intransitive subjects in ergative contexts are case-marked exactly like transitive subjects in the same contexts.

2.2.2. Conservative tendencies in verbal agreement.

Gujarātī, as well as a few dialects of Rājasthānī and Pahārī, has turned the transitive impersonal construction into a personal one by marking the verb for the number and gender of its object (which nevertheless remains oblique in case). This development effectively destroys any distinction between the impersonal transitive construction and the karmaniprayōga besides the case of the direct object (see Matthews (1952: 398-99); Chatterji (1926: 969); and Grierson (1908: IX.II.15,342)). Thus, in Gujarātī we find:

- (18) teoe nōkərne bolavyo.
they (erg.) servant (obl.) called (masc. sg.)
 (masc.)

chokərāe strīne joī.
children (erg.) woman (obl.) saw (fem. sg.)

(Lambert (1971: 88-89))

The transitive impersonal construction, which marks direct objects accusatively in imperative contexts, has, through a levelling apparently in favor of the karmaniprayōga, been made more consistent with Gujarātī ergativity from the point of view of verbal agreement.

Similarly conservative tendencies are found in Marāṭhī. In its most conservative usage, Marāṭhī can be seen to have retained the three original prayōgas as well as the secondary transitive impersonal construction; and further, to have fully integrated the erstwhile past passive participle into its verbal system by its analogically extended use of personal endings (rather than merely gender and number agreement) in the participial tense paradigms (Bloch (1914:260-61)). This is illustrated in the following examples:

- (19) kartaripr.: jhād padlē.
tree (nom.) has fallen (3rd sg. neut.)
(neut.)

karmanipr.: krpā kelī tumhī.
pity (nom.) done (3rd sg. fem.) you (erg.)
(fem.)

bhāvepr.: arjunē mhanitalē.
Arjuna (erg.) said (3rd sg. neut.)

trans. imp.: tyā-nē rāmās mārīlē.
he erg. Ram (obl.) struck (3rd sg. neut.)

(Bloch (1914:260-61))

Thus, the extended use of personal endings reinforces the ergativity of verbal agreement in Marāṭhī in its most conservative usage. Furthermore, an innovative construction found in contemporary usage results from a levelling of the transitive impersonal construction similar to the Gujarātī levelling just discussed, with the exception that in Marāṭhī, the formerly impersonal verb comes to agree with its object not only in number and gender, but also in person (although the object remains oblique, as in Gujarātī). Thus, colloquial Marāṭhī allows all three of the following constructions;

(20) karmanipr.: tyānē āplā mulgā
he (erg.) own (nom.) son (nom.)

śālēt pāṭhaviḷā.
school (loc.) sent (3rd sg. masc.)

trans. imp.: tyānē āplyā mulās śālēt pāṭhaviḷē.
(erg.) (obl.) (obl.) (loc.) (3rd sg. neut.)

trans. ex-imp.: tyānē āplyā mulās śālēt pāṭhaviḷā.
(erg.) (obl.) (obl.) (loc.) (3rd sg.
masc.)

(Bloch (1914:262))

This construction is standard in the western Marāṭhī dialects Konkan (Grierson 1905:VII.67) and Konkanī (Grierson 1905:VII.170, Katre 1966:169) and is apparently spreading eastward. Here again, the tendency seems to be towards the reinforcement of ergativity in verbal inflection.

To summarize what has been seen in this section: there are evidently some tendencies to conserve partial ergativity in a few Modern Indic languages. I have discussed a tendency to maintain subjects in ergative contexts in the ergative case, via elimination of the bhāveprayōga (dialectally in Hindī); a tendency to reinforce ergative patterns of verbal agreement through the use of personal endings in the participial tenses (as in Marāṭhī); and a tendency for all transitive verbs to agree with their objects in ergative contexts, at

the expense of the impersonal transitive construction (as in Gujarātī and Marāṭhī).

2.3. Eliminative trends.

I shall now proceed to a consideration of Modern Indic tendencies toward the elimination of partial ergativity. I have already mentioned one such trend, namely the analogical introduction of the impersonal transitive construction, whose effect is to allow direct objects in ergative contexts to be oblique rather than nominative. I shall survey further tendencies of this nature as they occur in Marāṭhī, Nepali, Lahndā, Eastern Māgadhan, and Maithilī.

Surprisingly, many eliminative tendencies are to be found in colloquial Marāṭhī, despite the suggestions of conservativeness discussed in section 2.2.2. First, nonthird person subjects of transitive verbs in participial tenses are often nominative in idiomatic Marāṭhī. When this happens, the verb (which, as always, agrees with its object (which remains nominative) in person, number, and gender) is marked for the number and person of the subject. Thus, in current speech:

- | | | | |
|------|-------------|--------------|--|
| (21) | tū | kām | ke-lē-s. |
| | thou (nom.) | work (nom.) | have done (3rd sg. neut;
(neut.) 2nd sg.) |
| | tū | pothyā | lihi-lyā-s. |
| | thou (nom.) | books (nom.) | have written (3rd pl. fem.;
(fem.) 2nd sg.) |

(Bloch (1914:262))

In the Konkan dialect, this agreement of a transitive verb with its subject has been further extended to the third person (Bloch 1914:262). This analogical development based on transitive constructions in the accusative tenses evidently suppresses the distinction between transitive and intransitive subjects and verbal agreement, and therefore contributes in two respects to the elimination of ergativity in Marāṭhī. Furthermore, it gives rise to another idiom, still more radically affecting Marāṭhī ergativity (although limited to a specific--if rather large--set of verbs (see Bloch 1914:263)). In this construction, a participial tense transitive verb agrees in person, number, and gender with its subject, which is nominative, as is its object, with which, however, the verb no longer agrees in any way. Ergativity is thus levelled in favor of accusativity in every respect besides the case of the direct object:

- | | | | |
|------|----------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (22) | mī | tujhī goṣṭ | visarlō. |
| | I (nom.) | your story (nom. sg. fem.) | have forgotten
(1st sg. masc.) |

tī asē mhanāli.
she (nom.) that (nom. sg. neut.) have said (3rd sg.
fem.)
(Bloch (1914:262))

This innovation is actually quite old, and has been diffusing lexically since early Marāṭhī (Bloch 1914:263-4). The transforming of the karmaniprayōga into a fully accusative construction is nearly completed by this second eliminative development.

These Marāṭhī colloquialisms--the uniform use of the nominative case for subjects and the agreement of the verb with the person, number, and gender of its subject--are paralleled by similar developments in other Modern Indic languages.

In Nepali, or Khaskurā, personal endings have, as in idiomatic Marāṭhī, been extended to participial tense verb forms so that, in historically ergative contexts, all verbs agree in person, number, and gender with their subject (Southworth 1967:14)--that is, verbal inflection in formerly ergative tenses has become fully accusative on analogy with inflection in the accusative tenses. Oddly, transitive subjects in participial tense constructions remain ergative. Thus, literary Nepali resembles idiomatic Marāṭhī as regards verbal agreement but not with respect to the case-marking of transitive subjects:

(23) mōyle yaslāi phalphūl diē.
I (erg.) him (obl.) fruit (nom.) gave (1st sg.)
(Clark (1977:32))

Interestingly, colloquial Nepali has, as it were, made up for the retention of the ergative case by neutralizing its distinction from the nominative: in popular usage, there is a strong tendency to put the subject of any transitive verb, whether in a participial or an accusative tense, in the ergative case (Grierson 1916:IX.IV.26; Clark 1977:93, 224, &c). For example, although the present tense isn't historically participial in Nepali, the following usage is common:

(24) usle kasko bikhay-mā bhanda-cha?
he (erg.) whom (gen.) matter loc. is speaking
'About whom is he speaking?'
(Grierson (1916:IX.IV.27))

This levelling of the pair of cases used to mark transitive subjects is perhaps the result of intensive contact with Tibetan, a Tibeto-Burman language which, in addition to being ergative, marks all transitive subjects ergatively (Grierson 1916:IX.IV.26-7):

(25) ŋa-s khyod rduŋ.
I erg. you beat
(Matthews (1952:399))

(It is also significant that Tibetan never shows verb-object agreement (Grierson 1916:IX.IV.26).) The upshot of this development in colloquial Nepali is that not only is ergativity no longer inherent in verbal inflection, but is no longer held distinct from accusativity in the case-marking of either the intransitive or the transitive subject--that is, the ergative/accusative distinction once maintained in the inflection of (transitive) subjects has become levelled in favor of a transitive/intransitive distinction. Furthermore, the case-marking of the object can no longer be thought to keep ergative constructions distinct from accusative ones, since, both in historically ergative contexts and in accusative contexts, the direct object may be either nominative or oblique (although animate nouns must apparently be oblique--Grierson 1916:IX.IV.25):

- (26) mēyle yaslāī phalphūl diē.
I (erg.) him (obl.) fruit (nom.) gave (1st sg.)

(Clark (1977:32))

- mēyle tyasko chorālāī kuṭeko chu.
I (erg.) his son (obl.) beaten have

(Grierson (1916:IX.IV.98))

- sitale rāmlāī cineko cha.
Sita (erg.) Ram (obl.) has recognized

(Southworth (1967:21))

- (27) nāñile tyo ghaḍī phāllā.
baby (erg.) that (nom.) clock (nom.) will knock down

(Clark (1977:226))

- inlāī kasari mārḍā-hun.
these (obl.) easily is killing (3rd sg. honorific)

(Grierson (1916:IX.IV.38))

Those constructions exemplified in (26) are in historically ergative contexts; those in (27), in accusative contexts. This confusion of nominative and oblique forms may be in part the result of an analogical extension of the object case-form of the since-levelled karmaniprayōga to historically accusative contexts: as with the levelling of the transitive subject cases to the ergative, Tibetan influence has probably contributed to the confusion (Grierson 1916:IX.IV.24). Thus, if literary Nepali can be said to have retained some vestiges of partial ergativity, the colloquial language certainly cannot.

Both Marāṭhī and Nepali tend toward the elimination of ergativity in verbal inflection; both languages do so by means of an

extension of verbal endings from the accusative tenses to the participial tenses. Interestingly, several other Modern Indic languages have also weakened or eliminated ergative verbal inflection, but have done so by a different strategy.

Lahndā (Western Panjābī), for example, employs such a strategy. Lahndā and Sindhī are unique among Modern Indic languages in their use of pronominal suffixes (from Old Indic enclitic pronouns--Chatterji (1926:970-71)) on both nouns and verbs. In Lahndā, there are two sets of suffixes, one nominative, the other referring to any case (including the nominative) (Grierson 1919:VIII.I.260-61). These endings may be used as or in agreement with any subject or object noun phrase (and double-suffixing sometimes occurs--Grierson (1919:VIII.I.271)). Now, this pronominal suffixation reinforces Lahndā ergativity to the extent that it is used to mark intransitive subjects and transitive objects identically:

- (28) (mā) jāteu-m.
I (nom.) knew (masc. sg.; 1st sg.)
- us (mā) mārea-m.
he (erg.) I (nom.) struck (masc. sg.; 1st sg.)

(Grierson (1919:VIII.I.270))

But this suffixation weakens the ergativity of verbal agreement in that it also allows intransitive subjects and transitive subjects to be identically expressed; compare (28) and (29).

- (29) (mā) usnū mārea-m.
I (erg.) he (obl.) struck (masc. sg.; 1st sg.)
- (mā) gā dīṭṭhī-m.
I (erg.) cow (nom.) saw (fem. sg.; 1st sg.)
(fem.)

(Grierson (1919:VIII.I.270))

This neutralization of the ergative/accusative distinction with regard to the pronominal suffixation of the Lahndā verb is all the more significant given that transitive subjects in Lahndā often drop their ergative postposition (Chatterji 1926:970) and consequently appear to be oblique in case.

Thus, Lahndā pronominal suffixation sometimes obscures the formal distinction between transitive and intransitive subjects (Sindhī is similar in this respect). The Māgadhan languages show a similar development, but one whose effect has been the virtual elimination of ergativity from this subgroup (Chatterji 1926:971).

The Eastern Magadhan languages Bengali, Assamese, and Oṛiyā have substantially similar developments. In all three, the patterns of case-marking and verbal agreement of the accusative tenses have become the established patterns of case-marking in historically ergative contexts: subjects are uniformly nominative (although Bengali and Assamese preserve a trace of an ergative suffix in special nominative forms used only as subjects of transitive verbs--e.g. Bengali santānē 'son' is used as a transitive subject, while santān is used as an intransitive subject); direct objects are uniformly oblique (dative if definite (and in most cases animate), accusative otherwise--Chatterji (1926:897)); and pronominal clitics of recent origin (and therefore not cognate with the pronominal suffixes of Sindhī and Lahndā) have evolved into personal endings by which verbs uniformly agree in person (and number, regularly in Oṛiyā, but irregularly in Bengali, where plural endings are used generally in nonthird persons) with their subjects (although in some dialects of Bengali and Assamese, the third person singular inflection differs according as the verb being inflected is transitive or intransitive--(Grierson 1903:V.I.13, fn 1). It follows that, in these languages, the bhāveprayōga has lost all distinctness from the kartariprayōga:

- (30) Bengali: āmi ḡelām. (pl.) (Grierson (1903:V.I.384))
 Assamese: may ḡāiṣilō. (Grierson (1903:V.I.444))
 Oṛiyā: mū gali. (sg.) (Grierson (1903:V.II.448))
 I (nom.) went (1st person)

The karmaniprayoga has become fully accusative in case-marking and verbal agreement patterns:

- (31) Bengali: ghōrā āmi chōṛilām.
horse (obl.) I (nom.) loosed (1st person pl.)
(Hoernle (1880:326))
- Assamese: xi nasār xabad xunile.
he (nom.) of dancing sound (obl.) heard
(3rd pers.)
(Grierson (1903:V.I.407))
- Oṛiyā: sē bājāra śabda śuṇilā.
he (nom.) of music sound (obl.) heard (3rd sg.)
(Grierson (1903:V.II.387))

Similarly for the secondary transitive impersonal construction, of which constructions with definite objects are the modern remnant:

- (32) Bengali: ghōrā-kē āmi chōrilām.
horse obl. I (nom.) loosed (1st pl.)
'I loosed the horse'

(Hoernle (1880:326))

Assamese: tār pitek-ak may khobālō.
his son obl. I (nom.) beat (1st person)

(Grierson (1903:V.I.445))

Orīyā: mū tā pua-ku mārili.
I (nom.) his son obl. beat (1st sg.)

(Cf. Grierson (1903:V.II.447, 449))

The Central Māgadhan language Maithilī is somewhat more conservative; but it has come to use an unusual variety of accusative verbal agreement. In modern Maithilī, the kartariprayōga has retained its most general characteristics unchanged since early Maithilī (although number agreement has been lost--Jhā (1958:288-90)):

- (33) ham^a gel^a (chi).
I (nom.) gone (masc.) am/are

o gelⁱ (achⁱ).
she (nom.) gone (fem.) is/are

(Jhā (1958:542))

The bhāveprayōga, karmaniprayōga, and transitive impersonal construction, on the other hand, are all but levelled in favor of accusative constructions. First, during the modern development of Maithilī, the impersonal transitive construction has supplanted the karmaniprayōga (Jhā 1958:543); this development has had the effect of eliminating the only participial tense construction in Maithilī in which verbs agree with their objects and in which a direct object may be nominative. Subsequently, the impersonal constructions have become accusative: first, personal suffixes of recent origin (from optional pronominal clitics of late development--Jhā 1958:479) are extended from the accusative to the participial tenses (an extension whose recent completion is reflected in a neat age-gradation among present-day Maithilī speakers--Jhā 1958:472, 508); secondly, the ergative case of the subject in these constructions is replaced by the nominative. The result of these developments (whose analogical basis is, no doubt, the established patterns of agreement in the accusative tenses) is that the impersonal constructions have become fully accusative, the only trace of their former impersonality being found in a periphrastic participial tense, the so-called present perfect instantaneous (Jhā 1958:526). Thus, modern Maithilī shows the following intransitive usages:

- (34) ham^a gelahū.
I (nom.) went (1st pers.)
(Jhā (1958:472))

ham^a haslahū achⁱ.
I (nom.) laughed (1st pers.) is (3rd pers.)
(Jhā (1958:543))

The suffixation of transitive verbs marks agreement with the subject, as with intransitive verbs; to a transitive verb so marked, however, personal suffixes may further be added in agreement with the direct object (or other oblique objects)--

- (35) ham^a tora beṭa-ke { dekhal-i-au.
I (nom.) your son obl. { saw (1st pers.; 2nd pers.)
 { dekhal-i-aī.
 saw (1st pers.; 3rd pers.)
(Jhā (1958:473))

ham^a khael-i-aī achⁱ.
I (nom.) ate (1st pers.; 3rd pers.) is (3rd pers.)
(Jhā (1958:543))

Thus, as the result of a historical suppletion of the karmaniprayōga by the impersonal transitive construction, of the loss of the ergative case, and of the introduction of an accusative scheme of verbal agreement into the participial tenses, Maithilī has become a fully accusative language.

To summarize what has been seen in this section: I have examined a number of tendencies eliminative of Modern Indic partial ergativity. These include the total suppletion of the ergative case by the nominative (as in Marāṭhī, Bengali, Assamese, Oriyā, and Maithilī); a confusion of the ergative and oblique cases (as in Lahndā); the transforming of the ergative case into a variant of the nominative case to be used with subjects of transitive verbs (as in Nepali); a concurrence of the nominative and oblique cases in the direct object in both ergative and accusative contexts (as in Nepali); the total suppletion of the nominative case by the oblique in direct object position (as in Bengali, Assamese, Oriyā, and Mathilī); the use of pronominal suffixes on the verb allowing intransitive subjects and transitive subjects to be identically marked (as in Lahndā); the use of personal endings on the verb by which agreement with the subject is expressed, whether to the exclusion of agreement with the object (as in Nepali, Eastern Māgadhan, and sometimes Marāṭhī) or not (as in Maithilī and, generally, Marāṭhī); and the de-personalization of transitive verbs in ergative contexts (historically in Maithilī).

3. Partial categorization of Modern Indic languages.

The conservative and eliminative tendencies discussed in the preceding sections are widely attested in the Modern Indic languages. To summarize these tendencies once again:

Conservative of ergative characteristics

in subject case-marking

- (A) the elimination of the bhāveprayōga;

in verbal agreement

- (B) reinforcement by the secondary use of ergatively-patterned personal endings;
(C) object-agreement in the transitive impersonal construction;

Eliminative of ergative characteristics

in object case-marking

- (D) the introduction of the transitive impersonal construction;
(E) the concurrence of nominative and oblique cases in both (historically) ergative and accusative contexts;
(F) the uniform use of the oblique case for direct objects;

in subject case-marking

- (G) the uniform use of the nominative case for subjects;
(H) the use of the (historical) ergative as a nominative of transitive subjects;
(I) the confusion of the ergative and oblique cases;

in verbal agreement

- (J) the use of pronominal suffixes to mark subject-agreement uniformly;
(K) the use of personal endings to consistently mark agreement with the subject, whether to the exclusion of object-agreement or not;
(L) the de-personalization of the karmaniprayōga.

I would now like to undertake a classification of the following Modern Indic languages according to their manifestation of any of the above tendencies (hereafter A-L):

Assamese	Panjābī
Bengali	Rājasthānī
Bhīlī	a. Mārwarī
Bihārī	b. Mālvi
a. Bhōjpurī	Sindhī
b. Maithilī	West Hindī
East Hindī	a. Bundēlī
Gujarātī	b. Braj Bhākhā
Khāndēśī	c. Kanaujī
Lahndā	d. Vernacular Hindōstānī
Marāṭhī	e. Dakhinī Hindōstānī
a. Konkan	
b. Koṅkaṇī	
Oriyā	
Pahārī	
West (Jaunsārī)	
Central	
a. Garhwālī	
b. Kumāūnī	
East (Nepali)	

(In Appendices I and II, I have indicated the genealogy and geographical distribution of these languages and dialects.)

The Hindi dialects of Bundēlī (Grierson 1916:IX.I.94), Braj Bhākhā (Grierson 1916:IX.I.78), Vernacular Hindōstānī, and Kanaujī (Grierson 1916:IX.I.84), as well as most dialects of Rājasthānī (e.g. Mārwarī, Mālvi--Grierson 1908:IX.II.28, 58), are the Modern Indic languages most conservative of the early Modern Indic system of participial tense prayōgas:

(i) Construction	Case of subject	Case of object	Verbal inflection
kartarīprayōga	nominative	--	number, gender of subject
karmaṇīprayōga	ergative	nominative	number, gender of object
bhāveprayōga	ergative	--	masculine singular
transitive impersonal construction	ergative	oblique	masculine singular

Only one eliminative characteristic is in evidence in this system, namely (D), the introduction of the transitive impersonal construction.

Standard Hindōstānī, Eastern Panjābī, and the Pahārī dialect of Kumāūnī employ a similar system, the difference being the conservative loss (A) of the bhāveprayōga in the latter languages:

(ii)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	number, gender of subject
	karṇāniprayōga	ergative	nominative	number, gender of object
	transitive impersonal construction	ergative	oblique	masculine singular

It should be noted that, due to the sporadic dropping of the ergative postposition in Eastern Panjābī, this language can be thought to exhibit (I) the confusion of the ergative and oblique cases, as an irregular innovation.

Gujarātī, the Pahārī dialects Jaunsārī and Garhwālī, Bhīlī, and Khāndēśī show a similar scheme of participial tense constructions, the difference being the additional incidence in these languages of the conservative development (C), object-agreement in the transitive impersonal construction:

(iii)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	number, gender of subject
	karṇāniprayōga	ergative	nominative	number, gender of object
	transitive impersonal construction	ergative	oblique	number, gender of object

This system is also irregularly employed in Rājasthānī.

The western languages Sindhī and Lahndā show a similar system, which, however, on the one hand lacks the conservative development (C), and on the other hand incorporates the additional innovations of (J) employing pronominal suffixes on the verb by which subject-agreement may be uniformly marked, and of (I) confusing the ergative and oblique cases (which are, in fact, syncretized everywhere except in the pronominal suffixes in Sindhī):

(iv)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	number, gender of subject; Suffix: person, number of subject
	karṇāniprayōga	ergative (~ oblique)	nominative	number, gender of object; Suffix: person, number of subject and/or object

(iv)	(continued)			
	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	transitive impersonal construction	ergative (~ oblique)	oblique	masculine singular; Suffix: person, number of subject and/or object

It should be noted that the innovation of (A) eliminating the bhāve-prayōga hasn't entirely eliminated this construction from Lahndā (cf. Smirnov (1975:112)); further, it should be observed that in Sindhī, different sets of pronominal suffixes are used to mark agreement with intransitive subjects on the one hand and transitive ones on the other. Both languages allow agreement with direct or other oblique objects to be similarly marked.

As was seen above, conservative Marāṭhī retains the early Modern Indic system of participial tense constructions, reinforcing its ergative agreement patterns by an extension of personal endings to the participial tenses:

(v)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	person, number, gender of subject
	karmaniprayōga	ergative	nominative	person, number, gender of object
	bhāveprayōga	ergative	--	3rd singular neuter
	transitive impersonal construction	ergative	oblique	3rd singular neuter

Thus, we find only the eliminative tendency (D) and the conservative tendency (B). But recall that idiomatic Marāṭhī appears to be levelling this scheme through a series of (incomplete) innovations--in addition to (C) the conservative marking of object-agreement on verbs in the transitive impersonal construction, colloquial Marāṭhī also shows the innovative tendencies (G) to use the nominative uniformly as the subject case, and (K) to mark verbs to agree with transitive as well as intransitive subjects (to the exclusion of any object-agreement, for some verbs). The result of these two innovations has been the weakening of contemporary Marāṭhī ergativity, especially in the nonthird persons--that is, the restriction of the karmanī and bhāveprayōgas as well as the transitive impersonal construction in favor of accusative constructions. Thus, despite the resemblance of the conservative Marāṭhī schema (v) of prayōgas to that of such conservative languages as Vernacular Hindōstānī (i), modern Marāṭhī is apparently drifting towards a radically reduced schema of participial tense constructions devoid of ergativity:

(vi)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	person, number, gender of subject
	transitive	nominative	{nominative, oblique}	person, number, gender of subject

Dakhiñ Hindōstāñ shows a similar system, although verbs show no personal agreement in this language (Grierson (1916:IX.I.62)).

Literary Nepali has apparently arrived at a very similar stage of development, the differences in Nepali being that transitive subjects remain ergative in participial tense constructions (i.e. innovation (G) is lacking) and that the impersonal constructions are retained as an 'impersonal honorific conjugation' (i.e. the conservative tendencies (A) and (C) aren't fully in evidence) (Grierson (1916:IX.IV.41-43)):

(vii)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	person, number, gender of subject
	transitive	ergative	{nominative, oblique}	person, number, gender of subject
	bhāveprayōga	nominative	--	3rd singular masculine
	transitive impersonal construction	ergative	{nominative, oblique}	3rd singular masculine

It will be recalled that colloquial Nepali gives evidence of the innovations of (H) treating the ergative case as a version of the nominative to be used with transitive subjects of verbs of any tense and of (E) using either the nominative or the oblique case to mark direct objects, regardless of whether the tense is historically ergative or accusative. The consequence of these developments is that the Nepali system of participial tense constructions appears to be shaping up as in colloquial Marāṭhī.

Maithilī has virtually attained accusativity, although a vestige of the transitive impersonal construction (D) is retained in periphrastic constructions in the participial tenses. Recall that by a suppletion of the karmaniprayōga by the transitive impersonal construction, innovations (F) (the uniform use of the oblique case for direct objects) and (L) (the use of personal endings to consistently

mark agreement with the subject) have become established in Maithilī; by two subsequent developments ((K) and (G)), both the bhāveprayōga and the transitive impersonal construction have become accusative (although both subject- and object-agreement are marked on transitive verbs). Thus, the only remnant of the impersonal constructions in modern Maithilī is the personal inflection of an auxiliary verb in a periphrastic construction. Hence, the following system of participial tense constructions occurs in Maithilī:

(viii)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	gender of subject; (*person of subject)
	transitive	nominative	oblique	person of subject, (person of object); (*3rd person)
	bhāveprayōga	nominative	--	person of subject; (*3rd person)
	(*Only in periphrastic constructions)			

The participial tense constructions have become fully accusative in Bengali, Assamese, and Oriyā: the case-marking of direct objects (F), of subjects (G), as well as verbal agreement (K) all suggest this:

(ix)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	person, number of subject
	transitive	nominative	oblique	person, number of subject

Eastern Hindī has similarly reduced its formerly ergative system of participial tense constructions (Grierson (1904:VI.5); Chatterji (1926: 971-72)), although it has retained gender agreement between verb and subject (Hoernle (1880: 217, 326)).

The situation is parallel in Bhōjpuri: case-marking and verbal agreement have become fully accusative. Erstwhile pronominal clitics have come to function as obligatory personal endings on the verb: all verbs, intransitive or transitive, agree with their subject (always nominative) in person and, less regularly, in number and gender (the former category being, in common usage, levelled in favor of the plural in the nonthird persons, the latter in favor of the masculine). The original kartariprayōga is preserved in endingless third person singular verbs agreeing with their subject in number and gender.

(x)	<u>Construction</u>	<u>Case of subject</u>	<u>Case of object</u>	<u>Verbal inflection</u>
	kartariprayōga	nominative	--	3rd person: number, gender of subject
	intransitive	nominative	--	person, number, gender of subject
	transitive	nominative	oblique	person, number, gender of subject

Clearly, the overwhelming tendency in these languages is to reorganize the inherited, ergative system of participial tense constructions as an accusative system fully parallel to that found in historically accusative contexts.

4. Analysis.

Thus, many Indic languages give evidence of a general tendency to eliminate ergative patterns of agreement in the participial tenses. I shall now briefly consider the theoretical conclusions to be drawn from this fact.

First, it should be observed that, despite trends in a few languages favoring the conservation of partial ergativity within the participial tenses, no modern Indic language has shown signs of extending ergative agreement patterns to historically accusative tenses. This fact stands in notable contrast to the widespread tendency in Modern Indic languages to level ergativity in favor of accusative patterns of inflection.

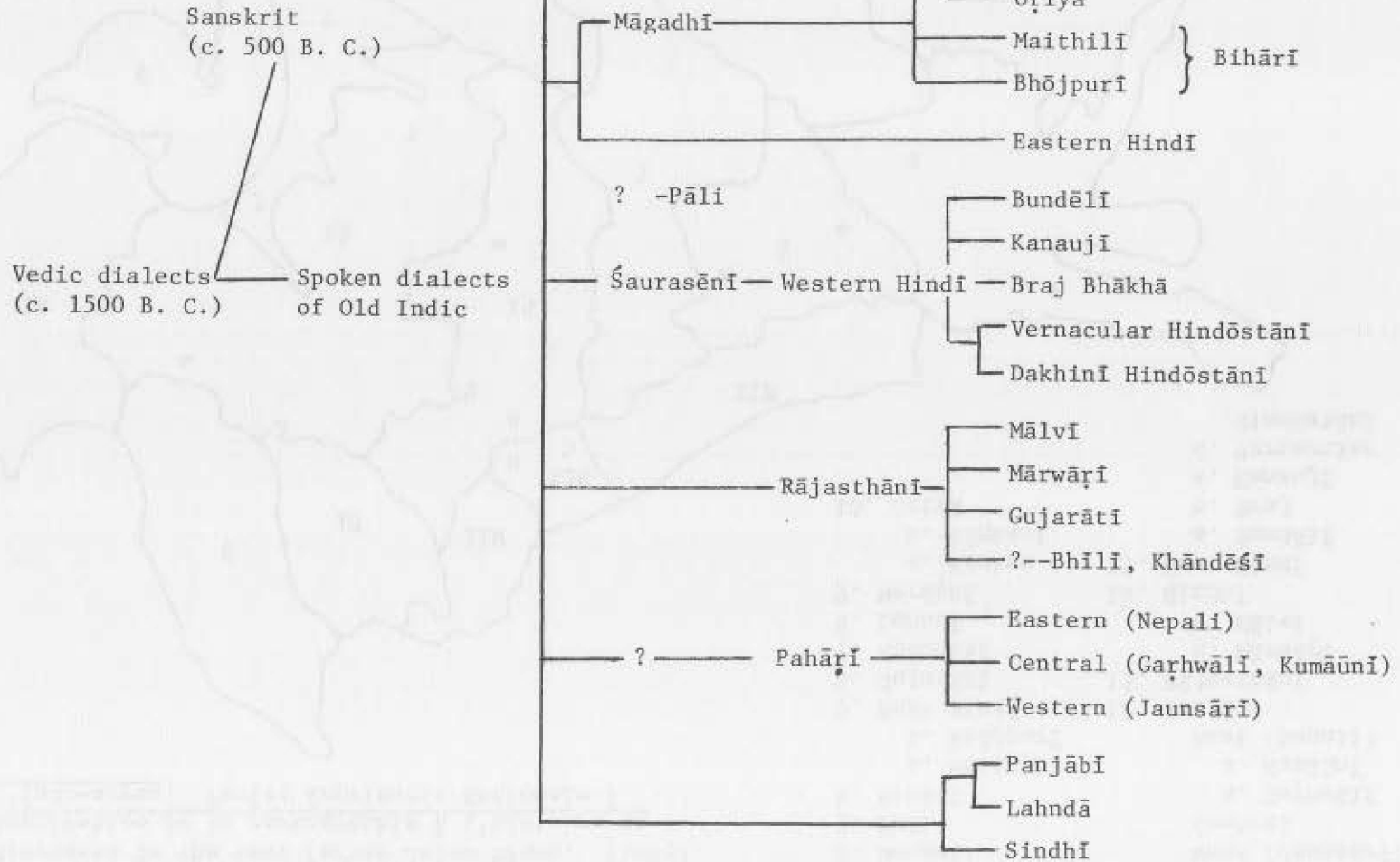
These diachronic observations bear significantly on the question of deep vs. derived ergativity in Indic. If it is indeed true that grammatical change is often motivated by a drive toward derivational transparency, then the evidence seems to suggest that ergativity is a purely derivative relational notion in the Modern Indic languages: if ergativity were, instead, a basic relational characteristic of Indic grammar, we would expect accusativity, if anything, to be levelled out, again in the interests of derivational transparency; but there is no sign of such a development in any of the languages considered. It may seem that I am begging the question of whether ergativity and accusativity might not both be able to be basic relational notions in a single language, or whether partial ergativity might not be able to be as 'deep' as deep ergativity. Such could perfectly well be the case in some language, but not, I believe, in any of the languages I have discussed here; the patterns of relational levelling in Indic are too regularly assertive of accusativity and eliminative of ergativity. Interestingly, the claim (that Indic ergativity is derived) that I am making on diachronic grounds is supported by synchronic evidence: Pandharipande and Kachru (1977) have suggested that ergative patterns of agreement as well as apparent instances of rules sensitive to ergativity

can be explained away on independent, nonrelational grounds in Hindi (in the present context, the Modern Indic language most conservative of partial ergativity).

5. Conclusion.

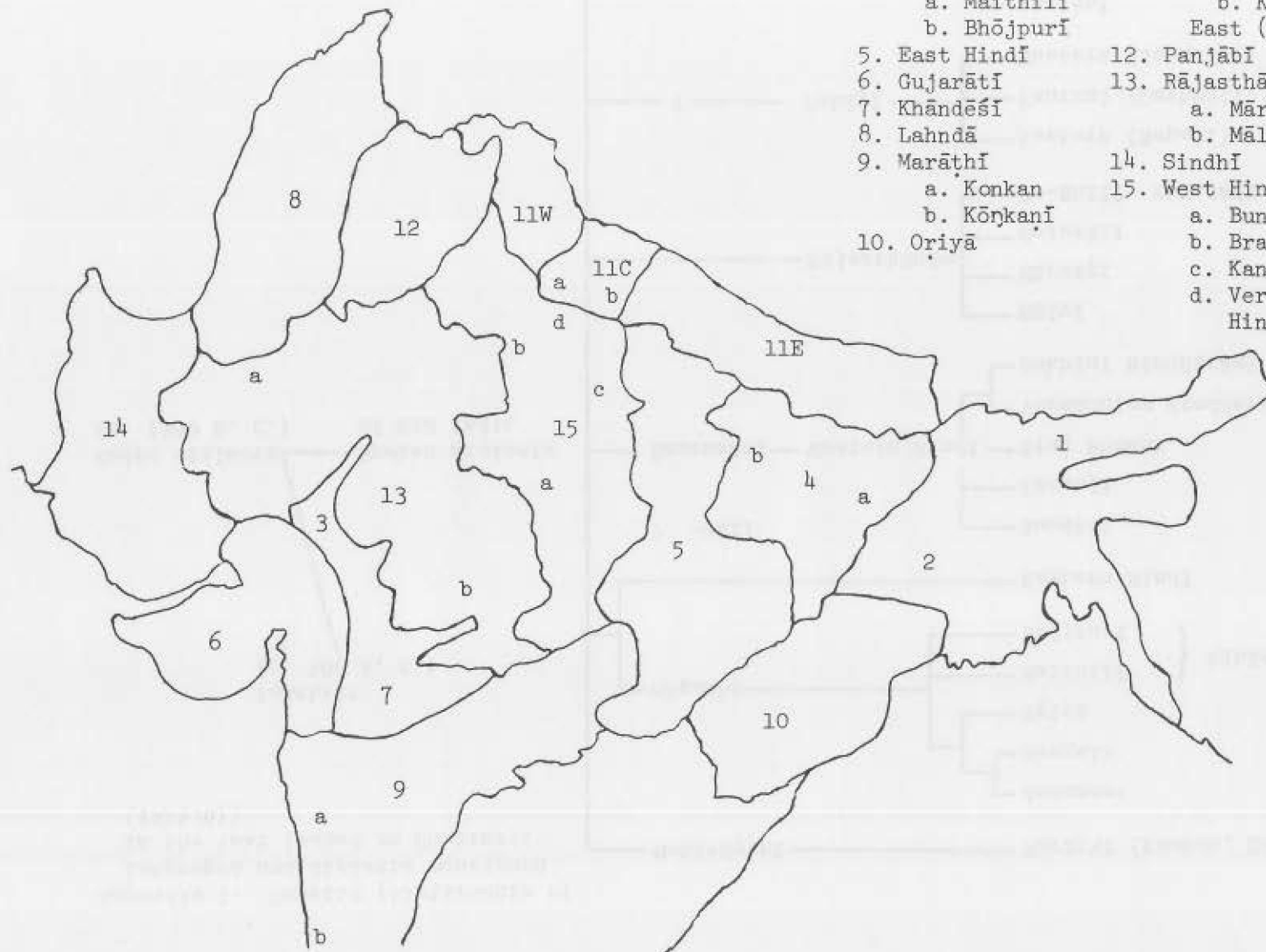
Having examined a broad range of Modern Indic languages, I have demonstrated the remarkable predominance of eliminative (as opposed to conservative) tendencies affecting ergative case-marking and verbal agreement patterns in the participial tenses in these languages. These tendencies are sufficient to be said to constitute a Modern Indic 'drift': given the assumption that Indic partial ergativity is a derivative phenomenon, it is evidently an opaque enough rearrangement of the underlying accusativity of these languages to induce its own elimination by successive generations of language learners.

Appendix I. Genetic relationship of languages and dialects mentioned in the text (based on Chatterji (1926:6))



Appendix II. Modern Indic languages and dialects
discussed in the text (after Jules Bloch. (1963).
Application de la cartographie à l'histoire de
l'indo-aryen. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.)

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Assamese | 11. Pahārī |
| 2. Bengali | West (Jaunsārī) |
| 3. Bhīl | Central |
| 4. Bihārī | a. Garhwālī |
| a. Maithilī | b. Kumāūnī |
| b. Bhōjpurī | East (Nepalī) |
| 5. East Hindī | 12. Panjābī |
| 6. Gujarātī | 13. Rājasthānī |
| 7. Khāndēśī | a. Mārwarī |
| 8. Lahndā | b. Mālvi |
| 9. Marāṭhī | 14. Sindhī |
| a. Konkani | 15. West Hindī |
| b. Kōṛkanī | a. Bundēlī |
| 10. Oriyā | b. Braj |
| | c. Kanaujī |
| | d. Vernacular |
| | Hindōstānī |



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